

THE BLAINE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Mary Ann Mix, Chairman • Leonard Harlig, Commissioner • Dennis Wright, Commissioner

March 8, 2000

National Marine Fishery Service
United States Army Corps of Engineers
Federal Agency Caucus Comment Record
c/o Bonneville Power Administration - PL
707 W. Main Street Suite 500
Spokane, Washington 99201

RE: ACOE DRAFT EIS: ALTERNATIVE IV and NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES:
"ALL-H" PAPER ALTERNATIVE A

The Blaine County Board of Commissioners had previously scheduled this evening, Wednesday March 8, 2000, for a county-wide transportation meeting in Hailey, Idaho otherwise we would attend your public forum to comment on the dam-breaching/salmon-saving proposals. We appreciate this opportunity to comment and we ask that Lynn Kincannon be allowed to read our comments into the record, as we ourselves would have been able to do if we could have attended. Thank you for your consideration.

Our Board appreciates the complexity of the issue before you. As public officials we are often called upon to decide difficult issues ourselves, so we fully understand that decisions such as these will impact the environment as well as the people who have interests on both sides of the discussion.

In order to limit the length of our comments in this letter, we would like to incorporate, by reference, the *Boise Statesmen* Special Series on Dam Breaching that was published July 20th, 21st, and 22nd 1997. This series of articles covered, in depth, the many viewpoints about breaching (partial removal) of the four Lower Snake River dams and the benefits and consequences of such actions. The *Statesmen* concluded, as we do, that the multiple benefits of partial removal far outweigh the few isolated deficits. We also concur with their recommendation that the few deficits be compensated through other programs so there are only "winners" in the partial removal process.

When the cost to date (\$3 Billion) of trying to protect the endangered salmon with barging, trucking, fish-ladders, etc. is compared with the cost (\$1 Billion plus) of partial dam removal, there is no economic justification to leave the dams in place. When the evaluation of the more expensive dam-preserving alternative is measured in terms of the level of present salmon population in the affected area, the record is clear that all the dam-saving alternatives have resulted in an absolute failure to preserve the species in the area affected by these four dams.

1 | The economic benefits of a healthy environment, and a tourist economy that comes to Idaho for fishing and recreation, is substantial. The benefits of this tourism economy enrich the entire state and bring large amounts of money to local communities as well as to the whole state. Our own county is a destination resort for hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. They come for many recreation activities it is true, however fishing in general and the attraction of the Red Fish area is of particular interest to our visitors. Many other counties prosper as well from the benefits of sport fishing and related activities.

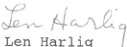
2 | As county commissioners we are also concerned that the failure to accomplish the partial removal of these four dams may lead to irrigation water diversions as an alternative method to help save the endangered salmon. Such a diversion would not affect our farming community directly, but would sharply affect other rural and agriculturally-based counties. In support of our agricultural friends and neighbors we ask that the partial removal of the four named dams be accomplished as soon as possible.

We support the two alternatives underlined at the beginning of our letter.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,


Mary Ann Mix


Len Harlig


Dennis Wright

cc: Idaho Conservation League